

Good morning, Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Transportation Committee - I come here today to speak about the importance of having a second crew member remain inside the cab of a locomotive. My name is Samuel Schatz and I am a Locomotive Engineer, based in Bellevue, Ohio, and operating between Conway, Pennsylvania and Toledo, Ohio. I also serve as Ohio's Vice Legislative Chairman and Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

I began my railroad career in June of 2006 as a 19-year-old conductor fresh out of high school. In my tenure as an over the road conductor, I have personally saved countless injuries or deaths by simply looking in my locomotive mirror and seeing people climbing through the train as we are about to start moving, most of them being children and teenagers leaving school. I was able to see an entirely different side of the train that the engineers is unable to see from their side of the locomotive.

As a conductor, our train struck a man - a son, a possible husband and father - just east of the Cleveland Browns Stadium in downtown Cleveland. I was able to warn approaching trains on the radio that the man was still alive and stuck between the rails of the second main line track as my engineer frantically attempted to bring our train to a stop. There is nothing that can take the place of a conductor's point of view from the other side of the cab of the locomotive.

A seventeen-year veteran of the railroad industry, I am now a locomotive engineer and I would be completely overwhelmed without a conductor with me in the cab of the locomotive. Becoming an engineer made me appreciate even more how critical the conductor is to safe rail transportation. As each year passes the work load increases on the locomotive engineer. We went from glancing at a couple of gauges to managing information displayed on four computer screens - each displaying different and equally important information for the safe operation of the train. Energy management systems, Positive Train Control, and distributed power all require quick action, and this is in addition to the basic locomotive display screen which contains the few gauges we began our careers using. Railroad operators expect the locomotive engineer to read through temporary speed restrictions on the run, blow the horn, ring the bell, listen and talk on the radio, and keep a vigilant eye out the windows of the locomotive while perfectly controlling increasingly long and heavy trains. It's insanity to expect a person to take these tasks on alone.

Can you imagine being alone and involved in one of the many incidents in Ohio over the past year? Completely helpless and unable to provide possibly life saving measures that only the second crew member - readily available in the cab - could provide. The conductor is the one who reviews shipping documents to determine the location of any hazardous materials and how to handle their potential release. Both members of the crew work together to find best and safest way to handle to situation. The conductor can get down and separate the train, minimizing damage to the community and saving the lives of the crew. The route I work passes through East Palestine and what happened two weeks ago could have just as easily had me at the controls. No one should have to handle a disaster like that alone.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.